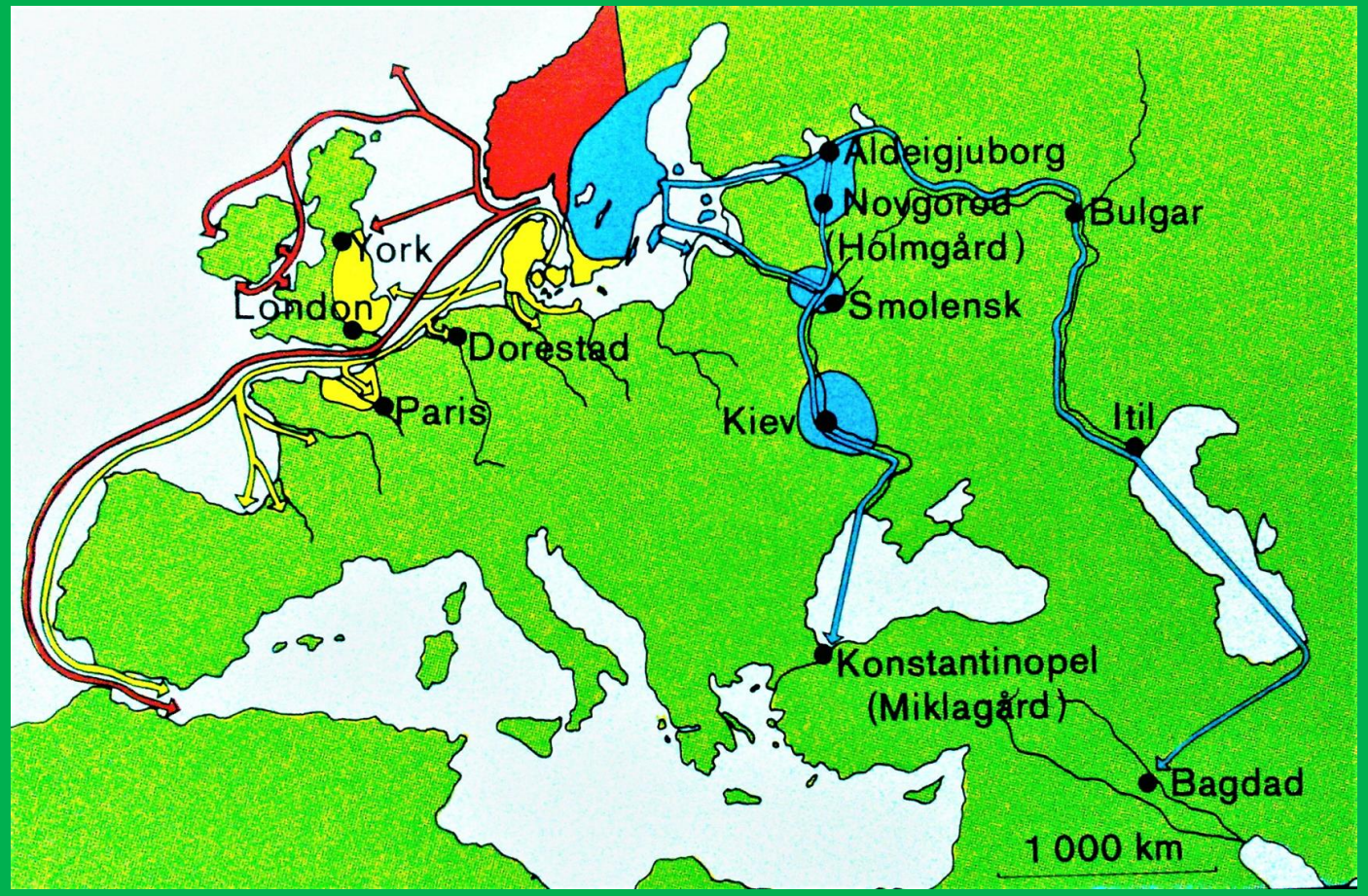
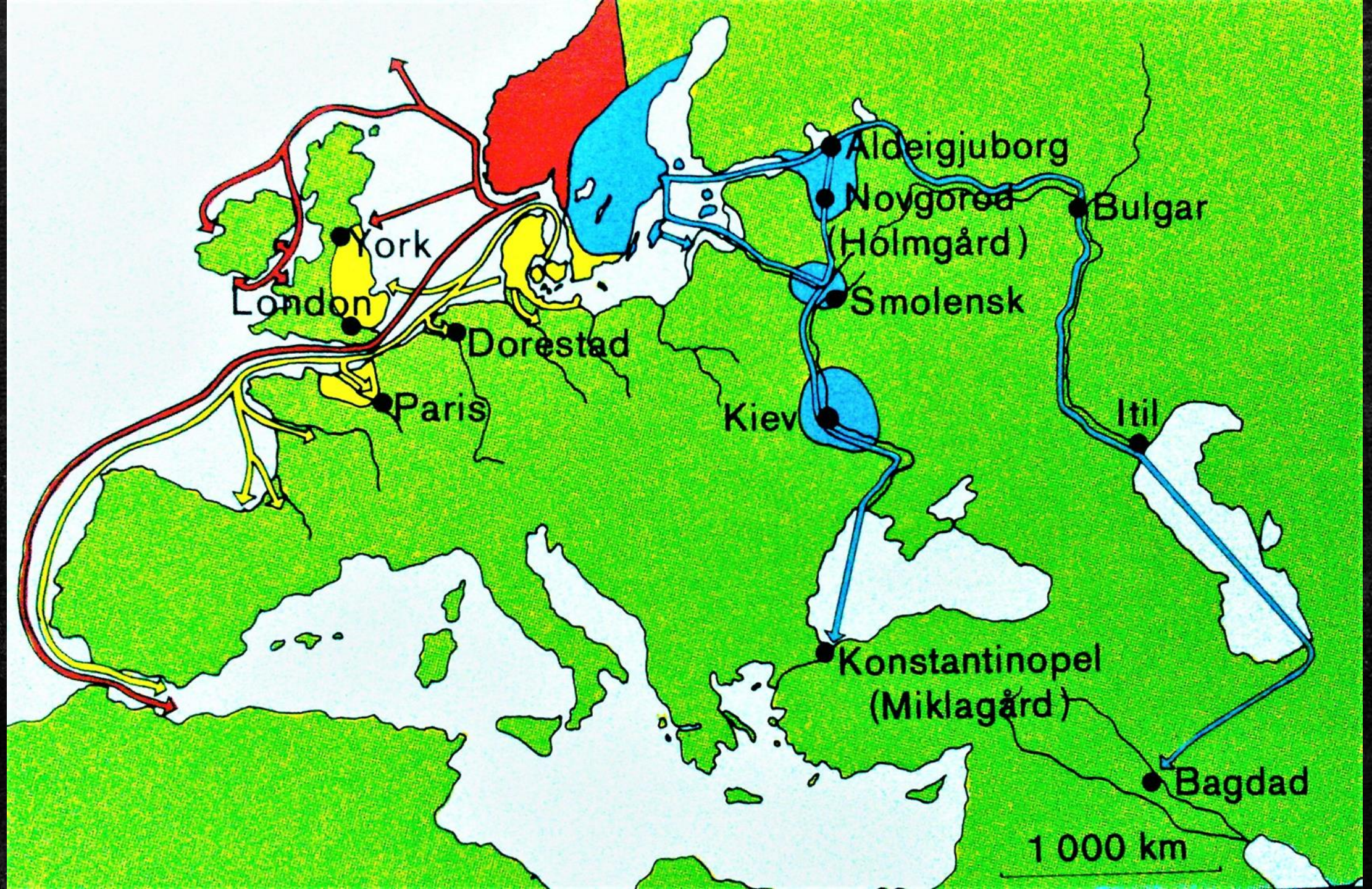
Go
East

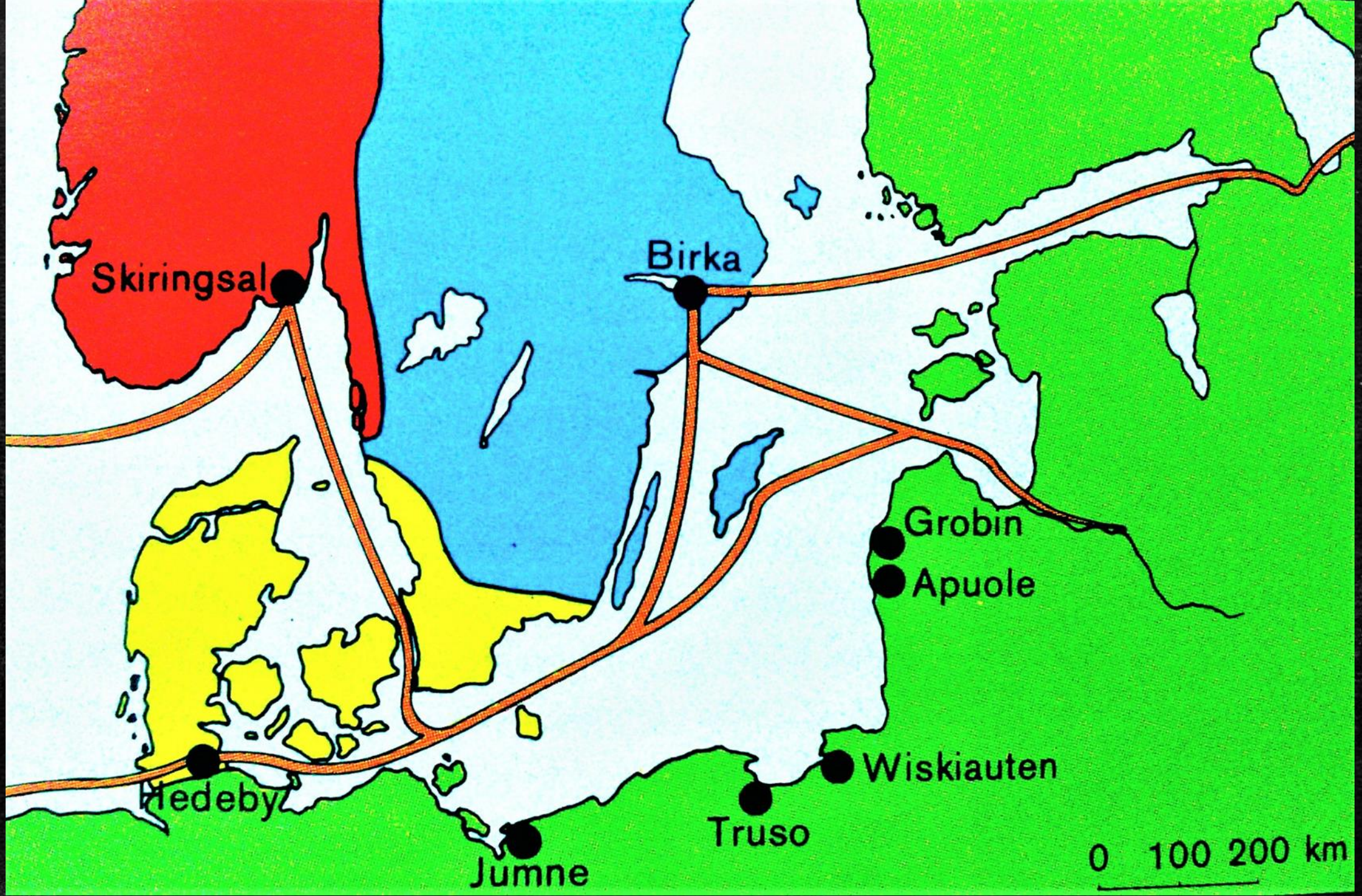
The Vikings Traveled to The East

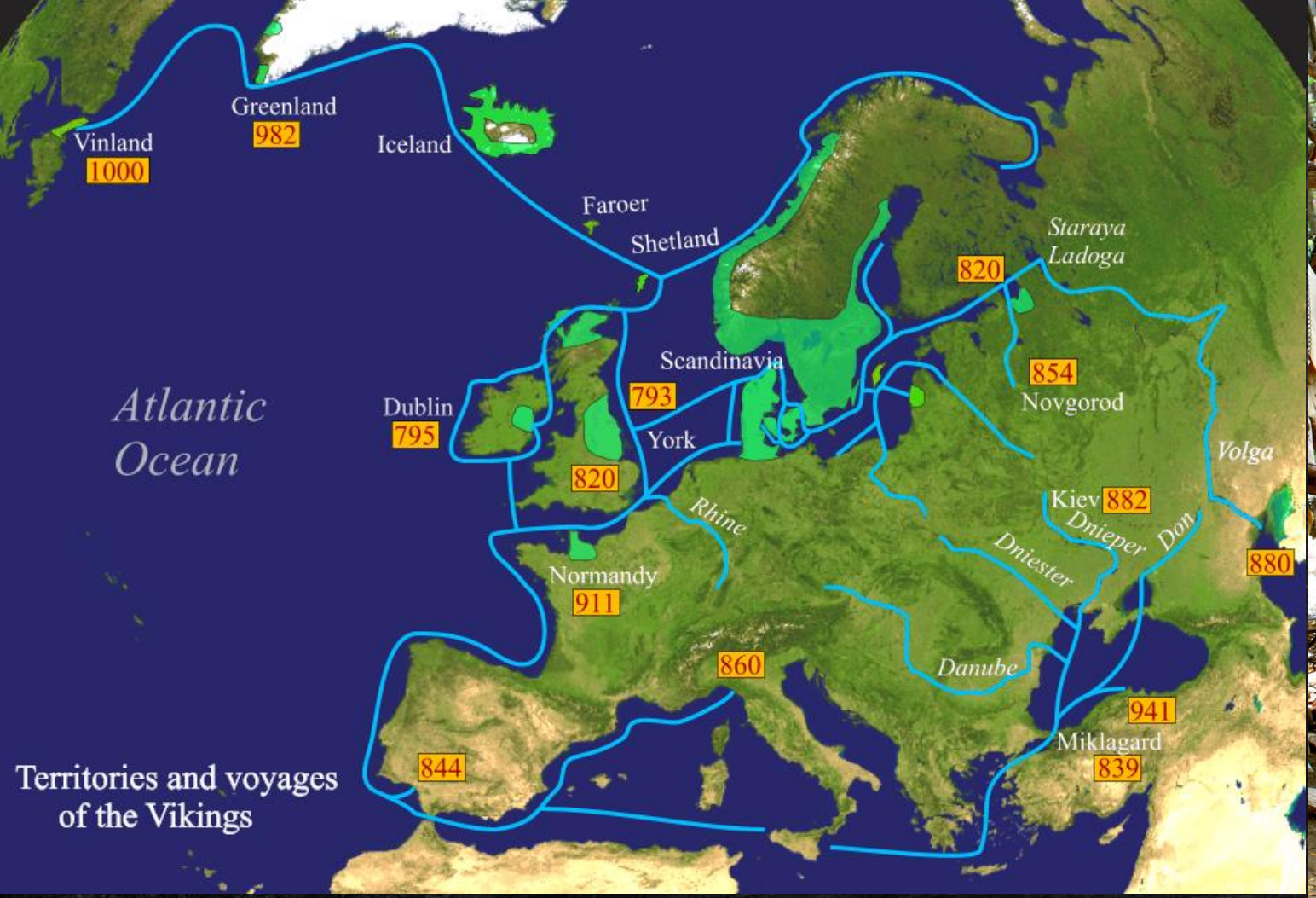



Aldeigjuborg
Noygorod
(Hólmgård)
Bulgar
York
London
Smolensk
Dorestad
Paris
Kiev
Itil
Konstantinopel
(Miklagård)
Bagdad
1 000 km

Volga

Volga

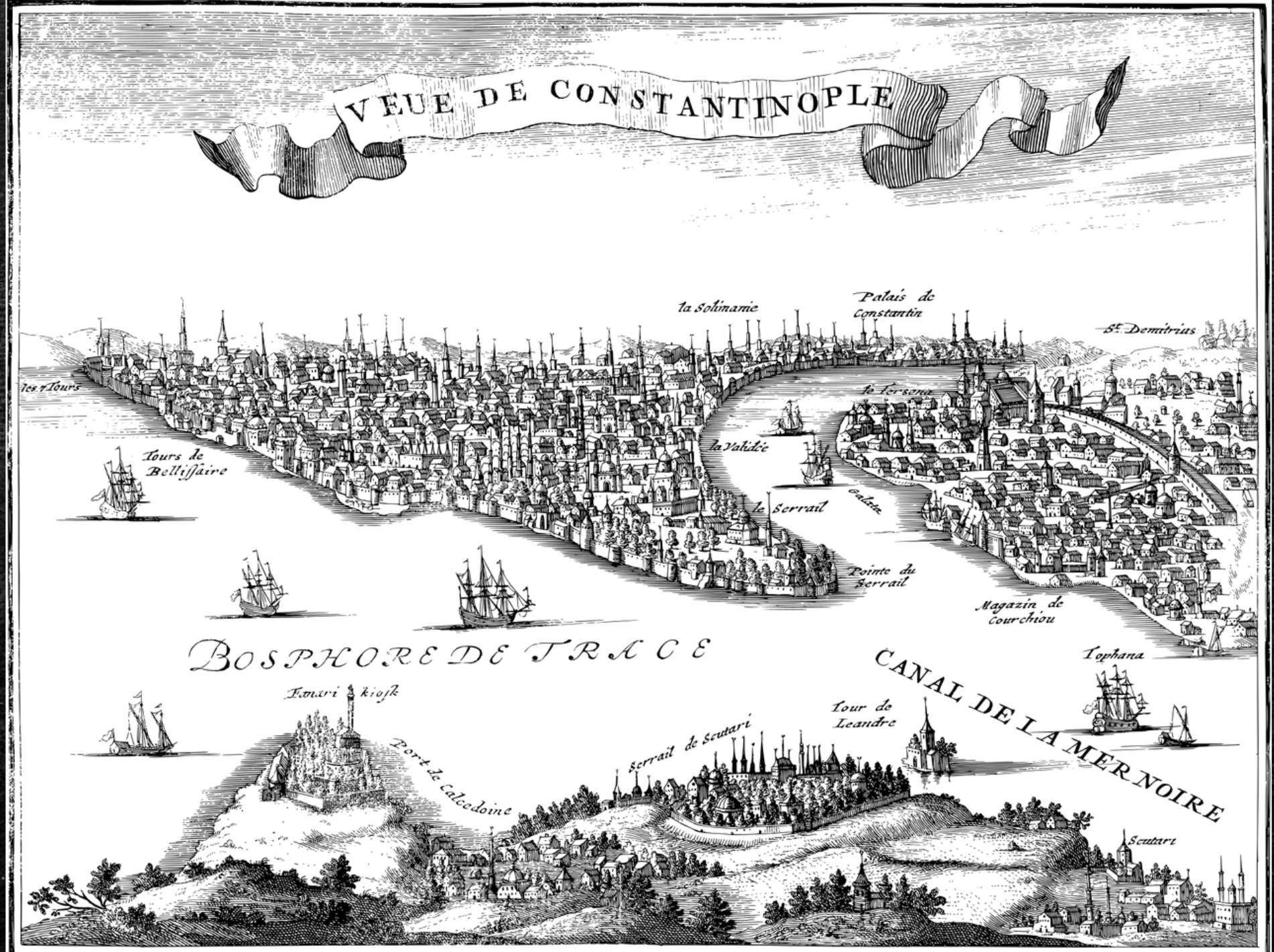

Skiringsal
Birka
Grobin
Apuole
Hedeby
Wiskiauten
Truso
Jumne
0 100 200 km



The Vikings different destinations and choices of ways out into the World

The creation of Russia began with Viking adventurer-traders who opened up trade routes beginning around A.D. 800 on the great Russian rivers like the Dnieper and the Volga between the Baltic, Black and Caspian Seas. They dominated the land and ruled the cities in the 9th and 10th centuries. At its height the territory under their control stretched from Lake Onega in the north, near the Black Sea in the south , the Volga in the east and the Carpathian Mountains in the west. They remained in the region until the 11th century when they were assimilated by indigenous tribes. [Source: Robert Paul Jordan, National Geographic, March 1985]

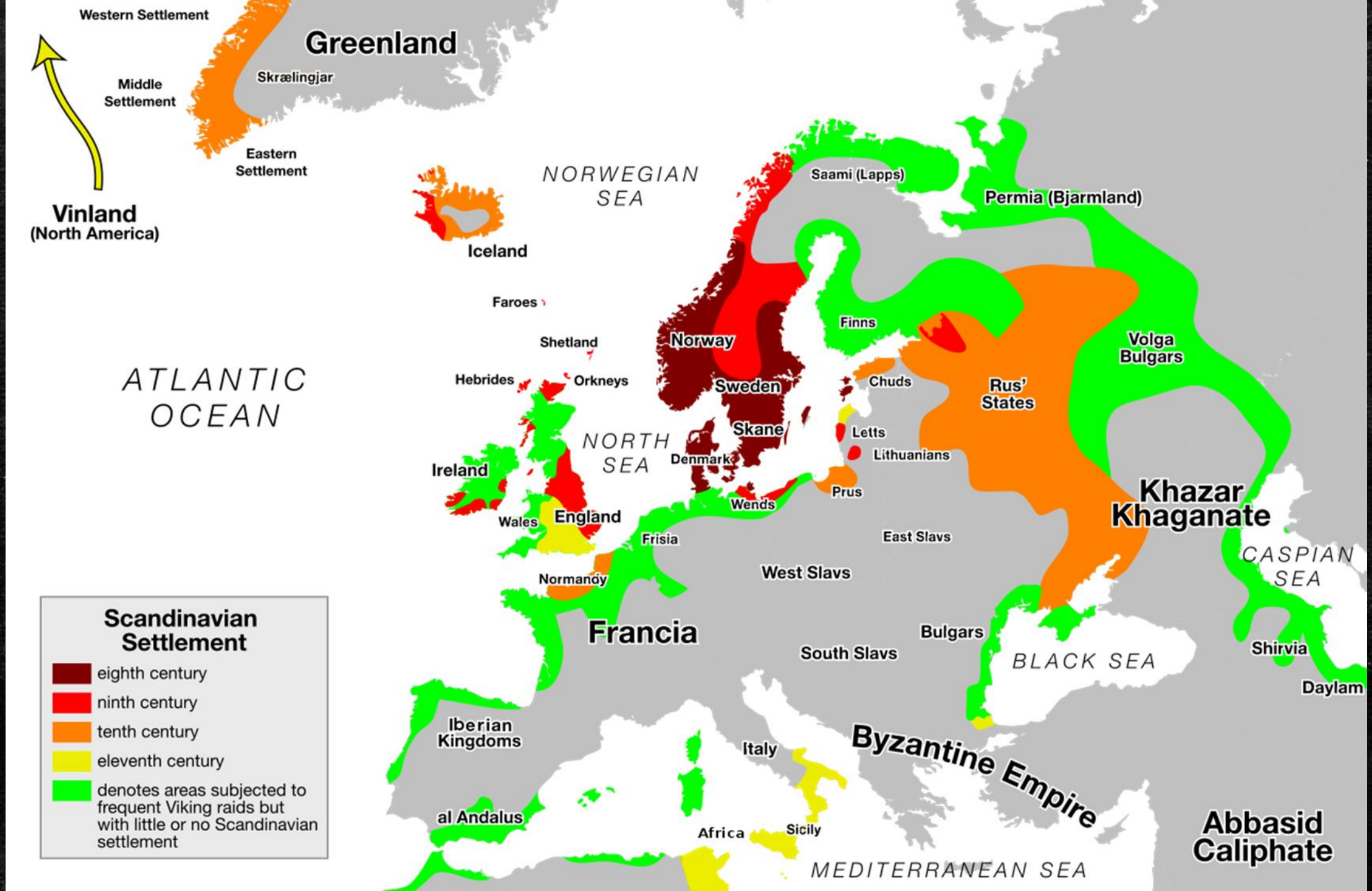
Map showing the major Varangian trade routes: the Volga trade route (in red) and the Dnieper and Dniester routes (in purple). Other trade routes of the 8th–11th centuries shown in orange.


VEUE DE CONSTANTINOPLE
la Solimanie
Palais de Constantin
St. Demitrius
le Fer sene
la Validée
Galata
le Serrail
Pointe du Serrail
Magazin de Courchiou
Tours de Bellissaire
BOSPHORE DE TRACE
CANAL DE LA MER NOIRE
Tophana
Tour de Leandre
Fanari kiosk
Port de Calcedoine
Serrail de Scutari
Scutari

ΘΥ ΙΣ
ΧΣ Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ
ΙΩ

The Viking in Russia came as traders not conquerors. They first appeared in the region in the 6th century and has some run ins with the Khazar. The Norwegians and Danish Vikings were centered primarily in western Europe, but the Swedes looked eastward to the Baltic and what is now Russia. Many of the Vikings that traded in present-day Russia hailed from Birka and Gotland in present-day Sweden.

Early Scandinavians in Russia were known as Rus to the Slavs (Rhos to the Byzantines). Rus is an Arabic word and the source of the word Russia. It may have been used to describe the dominant Kievan Viking clan and later became affixed to the Eastern Slavs in the north, while those in the south became known as Ukrainians and Belarussians. The Rus were also called Varangians and Varyagi. The Baltic was known as the Varangian Sea and their trade routes were called the Varangian Way.


Western Settlement
Greenland
Skrælingjar
Middle Settlement
Eastern Settlement
Vinland
(North America)
NORWEGIAN SEA
Saami (Lapps)
Permia (Bjarmland)
Iceland
Faroes
Shetland
Finns
Norway
Volga Bulgars
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Hebrides
Orkneys
Sweden
Chuds
Rus' States
Skane
Letts
NORTH SEA
Denmark
Lithuanians
Ireland
Prus
Khazar Khaganate
Wends
Wales
England
Frisia
East Slavs
CASPIAN SEA
Normandy
West Slavs
Francia
Bulgars
South Slavs
BLACK SEA
Shirvia
Daylam
Iberian Kingdoms
Italy
Byzantine Empire
al Andalus
Africa
Sicily
Abbasid Caliphate
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Scandinavian Settlement
eighth century
ninth century
tenth century
eleventh century
denotes areas subjected to frequent Viking raids but with little or no Scandinavian settlement

The Rus mingled with the local people and helped set up a series of small principalities centered around single families and clans. They became concentrated in places like Novgorod, Smolensk and Kiev. Viking princes became rulers in Novgorod and Kiev in 862 and 882.

By the ninth century, these Scandinavian warriors and merchants, had penetrated the East Slavic regions. According to the Primary Chronicle , the earliest chronicle of Kievan Rus', a Varangian named Rurik first established himself in Novgorod, just south of modern-day St. Petersburg, in about 860 before moving south and extending his authority to Kiev. The chronicle cites Rurik as the progenitor of a dynasty that ruled in Eastern Europe until 1598. Another Varangian, Oleg, moved south from Novgorod to expel the Khazars from Kiev and founded Kievan Rus' about A.D. 880. During the next thirty-five years, Oleg subdued the various East Slavic tribes. [Source: Library of Congress, July 1996 *]

ISLAND
Thingvellir
Lofoten
Borg
BJARMALAND
Trondheim
Nidaros
Färöarna
Shetland
Hjaltland
Atlanten
Staraja Ladoga
Aldeigjuborg
Beloozero
Hebriderna
Suderöarna
Orkney-
öarna
Bergen
Oseberg
Uppsala
Sigtuna
GÅRDA-
RIKE
Kaupang
Birka
Novgorod
Holmgård
Nordsjön
Östersjön
Bulgar
IRLAND
Roskilde
Jelling
Ribe
Hedeby
Paviken
Uppåkra
Lund
Izborsk
VIRLAND
Polotsk
Limerick
York
Jorvik
Man
Gnezdovo
Danelagen
Cork
Water-
ford
Hamburg
Bremen
London
Jomsborg
BRETLAND
KIEVRIKET
Dorestad
FRISLAND
Köln
Kiev
Könugård
Dnepr
Volga
Normandie
Nantes
Paris
Trier
Sarkel
ÖSTFRANKISKA
RIKET
VÄSTFRANKISKA RIKET
VALLAND
La Coruna

The Rus lived in wattle-and daub houses and hand-worked iron and bronze and made glass and amber beads. They also used grinding stones and weights and balances. The main cities had earth ramparts, ship repair and food storage facilities, and graves with both cremated and nonburned remains. Among the craftsman were blacksmiths, jewel makers, silversmith and carvers of bone combs.

Life revolved around the seasons. Beginning in November, the Rus settled in small settlements made from logs along rivers and lakes and went into the countryside seeking tributes, raiding those who refused to pay up. When the ice began breaking up in April, they Rus took to the rivers in fleets of river boats filled with cargo.

Viking kept slaves. They took Celtic and Russian slaves. Many Scandinavians are descendants of Scandinavian Viking who intermarried with Celtic and Russian slaves. Many slaves were freed or married to free men. For those who remained slaves, their offspring were freed.

The trade route from the Varangians to the Greeks, according to Marika Mägi (In Austrvegr: The Role of the Eastern Baltic in Viking Age Communication across the Baltic Sea,

Viking-era towns of Scandinavia

Scandinavians developed the notion of a popular assembly. Community assemblies, called things, acted as legislatures and courts. They introduced assemblies it in the year A.D. 1000 to present-day Russia, but they didn't really catch on.

Large caches of artifacts from Viking settlements have been found on Lake Ladoga in Russia and Gotland in Sweden in the Baltic. Large amounts of coins have been found. Many are believed to have been buried to keep them away from pirates. Artifact recovered Rus graves at Gnezdovo, a 10th century settlement in the forest near Smolensk, include silver Scandinavian-style pendants, Slavic style jewelry, and Arab-style bronze ornaments with scabbard clips and circular cloak fasteners.

In the Middle Ages, the Volga trade route connected Northern Europe and Northwestern Russia with the Caspian Sea and the Sasanian Empire, via the Volga River. The Rus used this route to trade with Muslim countries on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, sometimes penetrating as far as Baghdad. The powerful Volga Bulgars (cousins of today's Balkan Bulgarians) formed a seminomadic confederation and traded through the Volga river with Viking people of Rus' and Scandinavia (Swedes, Danes, Norwegians) and with the southern Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire)

Rurik and his brothers Sineus and Truvor arrive at Ladoga by Viktor Vasnetsov

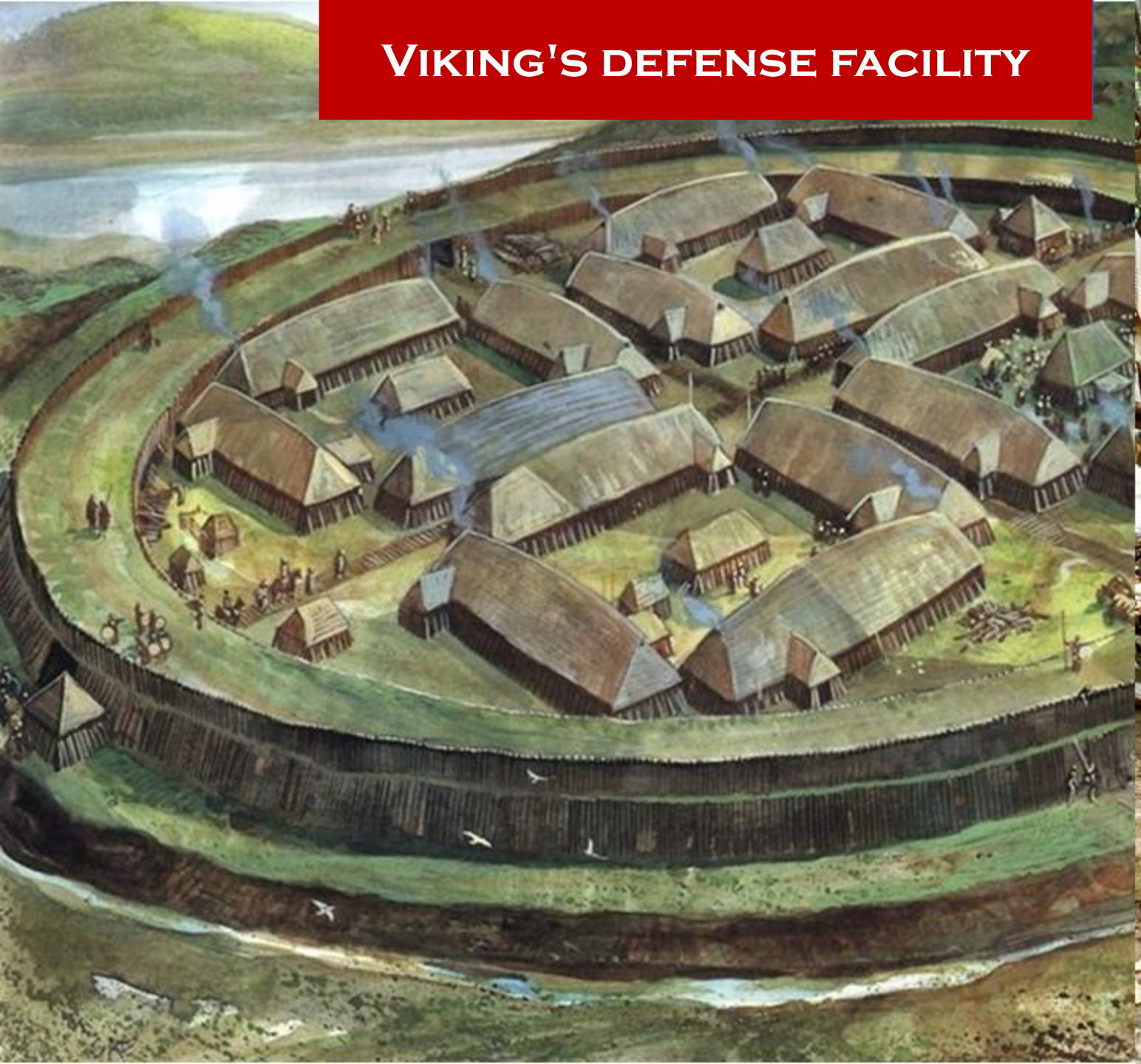
According to the 12th-century Kievan Primary Chronicle, a group of Varangians known as the Rus settled in Novgorod in 862 under the leadership of Rurik. Before Rurik, the Rus' might have ruled an earlier hypothetical polity named Rus' Khaganate. Rurik's relative Oleg conquered Kiev in 882 and established the state of Kievan Rus', which was later ruled by Rurik's descendants.

Image of Rurik in the "Tsar's titularnik"

Rurik on the Monument «Millennium of Russia» in Veliky Novgorod

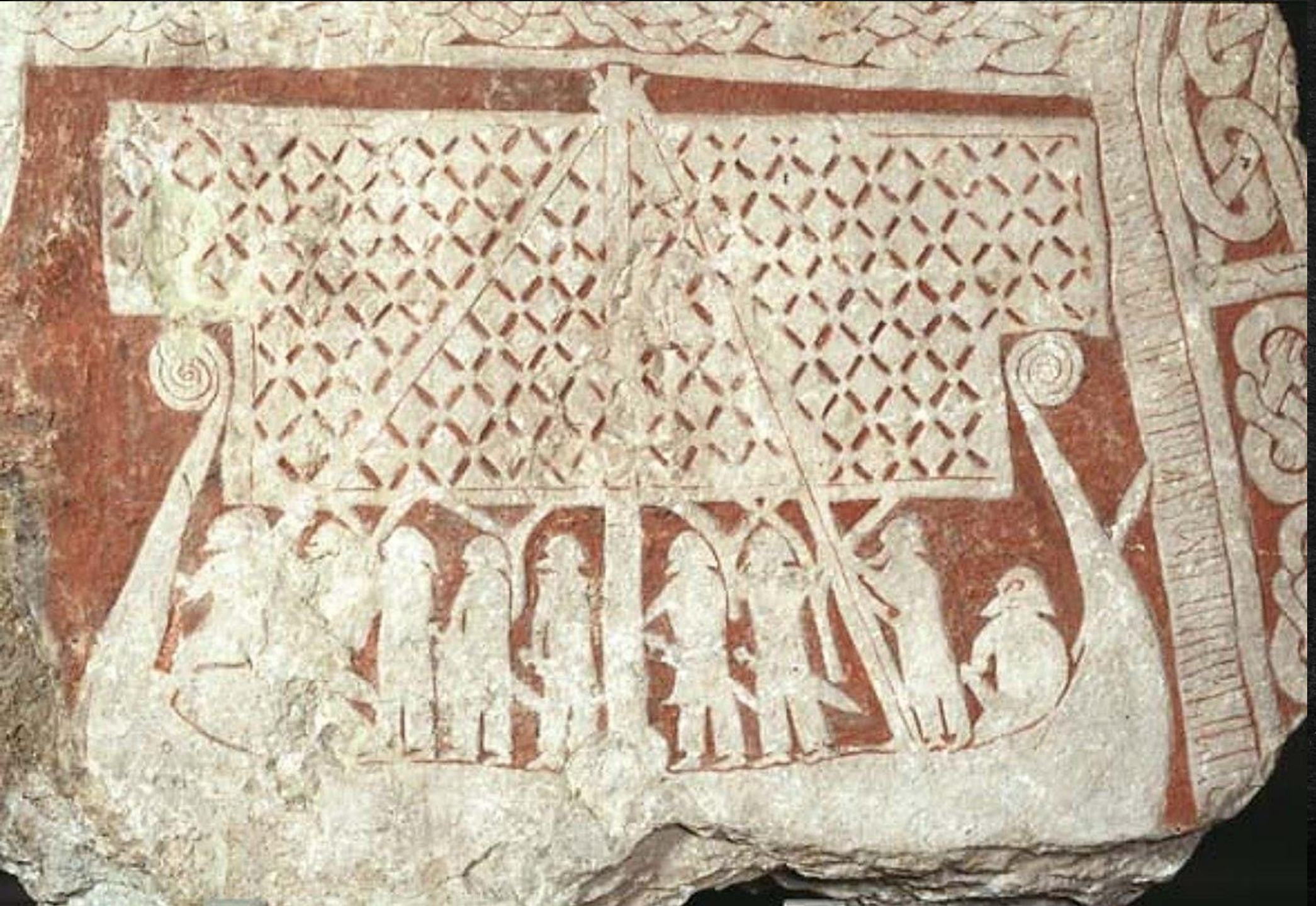
ENGLANDS
EROBRING
KONG SVENDS
SVEND TVES
KNUD STOR

Viking's defense facility



The Vikings traded furs, amber, honey, beeswax, weapons and slaves from the north for silks and silver. Most of the goods that made their way between Europe, Russia and the Middle East followed Viking trade routes. Of the 120,000 coins found in Gotland Sweden, 50,000 were of Arabic origin (the rest were mostly English or German).

The Rus traveled in convoys and flotillas, often with more than more than hundred boats, and built fortified trading posts. They traveled on the inland waterways in shallow-draft boats carved by local residents from tree trunks. They were about 20 feet long and 7 to 10 feet wide.



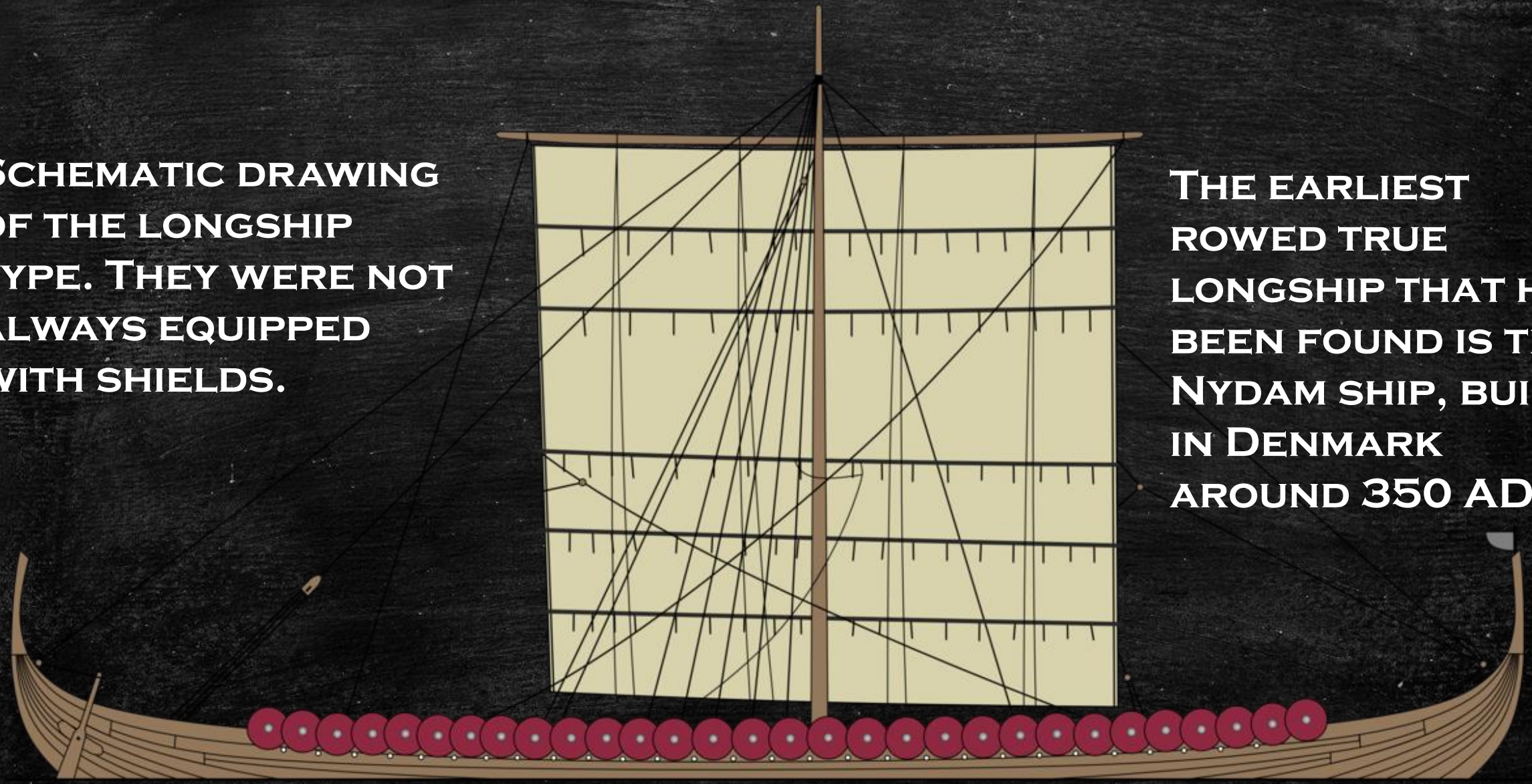
Longship on Tjängvide image stone, Sweden 800–1099.

The Volga route was the most traveled route. It began on Gulf of Finland (an eastern arm of the Baltic Sea east of present-day Helsinki), where traders ventured on the Neva River to Lake Ladoga. From Lake Ladoga travelers they moved southward on of three small rivers and portaged stretches to two upper arms of the Volga. Along the way, the Rus were forces to pay tribute to Jewish Khazars and Muslim Bulgars, whose territory they passed through.

Until it was blocked by hostile tribes in the 970s, the Volga was the main trade route for Arab silver to Europe. The city of Bulgar and the Khazar port of Itil were the main trade centers.

After reaching the Caspian Sea, the Rus sailed to its southern shores, where they met up with Silk Road camel caravans with goods from China, Baghdad and Persia. Ancient coins from China and Samarkand found in Sweden most likely came on this route.

Schematic drawing of the longship type. They were not always equipped with shields.



The earliest rowed true longship that has been found is the Nydam ship, built in Denmark around 350 AD.

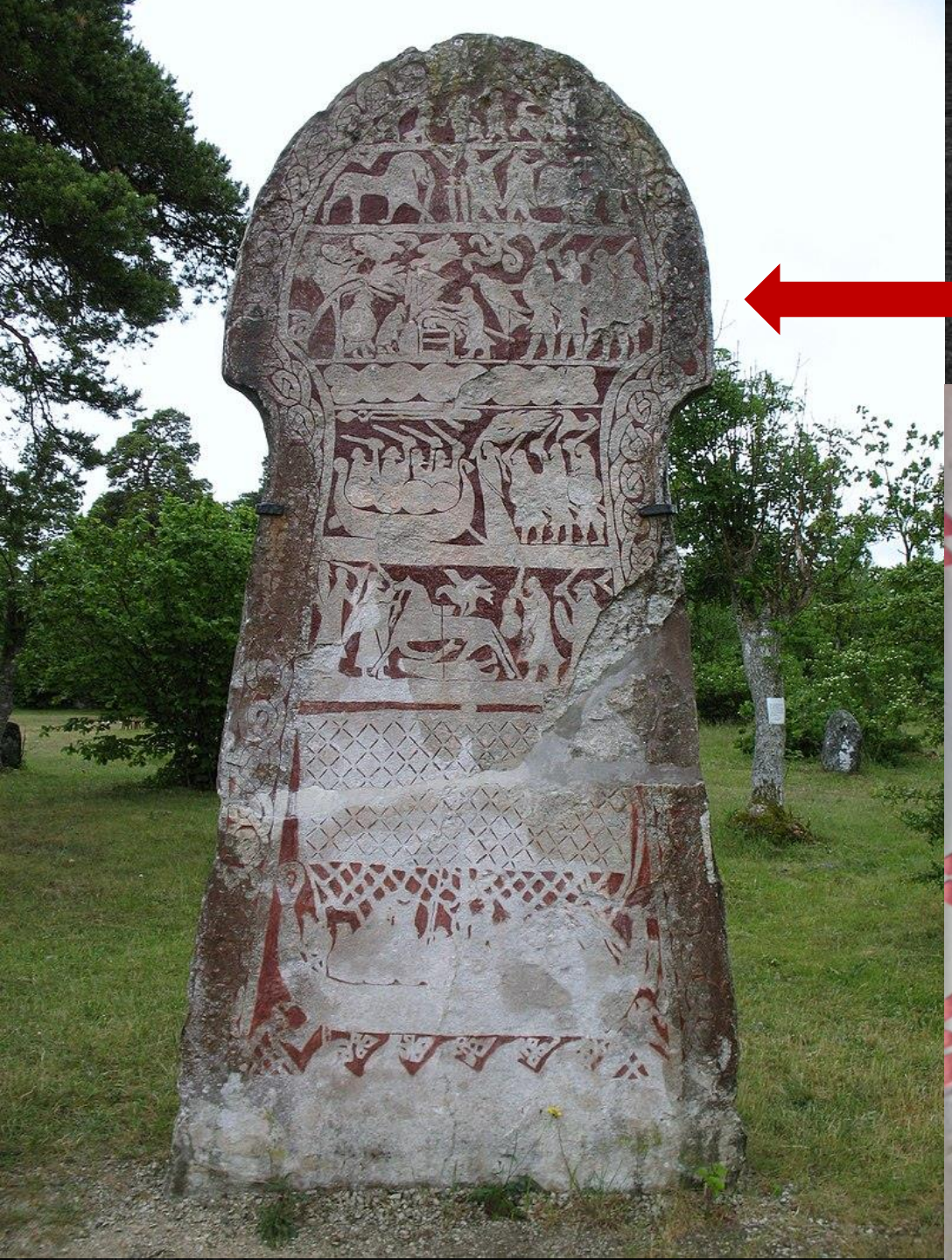
The journey to Kievan Rus

At the end of the 8th century the first Viking ships reached Kievan Rus, which was the name of the Russian state at this time.

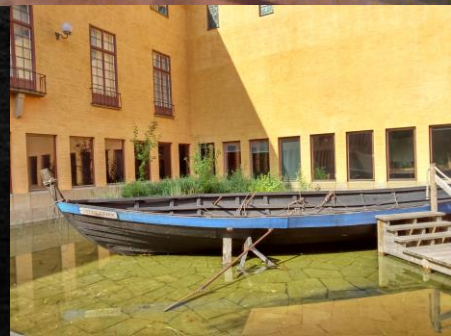
The town of Staraya Ladoga was the Vikings' access point to Kievan Rus. Visitors to the town today can still see the Viking burial mounds along the Volkhov River.

The trading town of Ladago emerged at the end of the 700s. It had much in common with, for example, Hedeby and Birka, but was also used as a "lay-by" where traders with goods could wait for suitable weather to continue their journeys.

The Stora Hammars I stone, Sweden



Historiska



Vikingagården
Outdoor Viking crafts and games
Utställningen Vikingar
Viking exhibition
Visningar och audioguider,
gå till informationen
Guided tours and audioguides,
go to Information desk